

VZCZCXRO8291
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSA #2274/01 2911453
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 171453Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6040
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
INFO RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 6135
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 0275
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 8486

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PRETORIA 002274

DEPT FOR OES/PCI, OES/ENV, AND AF/S
DEPT PASS EPA/OIA,

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [ETRD](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY BRIEFINGS, SEPTEMBER 2008

PRETORIA 00002274 001.2 OF 003

1. (U) Summary: This is the South African Environment, Science and Technology Monthly Briefings Newsletter, September 2008, Volume 3, Number 9, prepared by the U.S. Embassy Pretoria, South Africa.

Topics of the newsletter:

- RHINO POACHING INCREASING IN KRUGER PARK
- NON-GMO MAIZE SHORTAGES THREATEN SA INDUSTRY
- WILDFIRES KILL FOURTEEN PEOPLE, INJURE SIXTY AND DESTROY 635 HOUSES
- SA MOVING TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY
- GLOBAL SCIENTISTS ENCOURAGED TO ASSIST SA SCIENTISTS
- DOW JONES SUSTAINABILITY INDEX LISTS SASOL
- CABINET LEADS THE WAY IN SOUTH AFRICA TREE-PLANTING CAMPAIGN
- SOUTH AFRICAN 2008 TREE OF THE YEAR: Harpephyllum Caffrum Bernh
- MONTHLY FACTOID

Rhino Poaching Increasing in Kruger Park

2 (U) World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has reported an increase in the number of rhino killed in South Africa by poachers and horn smugglers in recent months. Spokesperson for WWF and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Jaques Flamand said the Kruger National Park is the worst affected. He also commented that there were only 4,000 black rhinos left worldwide, and the number will decrease if the poaching is not stopped. Flamand noted by South African standards the number of rhinos poached here is very high, a record nine in 2008. Twenty rhinos were killed in 2008 in Zimbabwe's Lowveld conservancies. No records are available for other areas within Zimbabwe. Flamand attributes increasing rhino poaching to rising demand for rhino horn in China and other Asian countries. Flamand said it was expensive to protect rhino effectively against poaching because such protection requires many game rangers and weapons.

Non-GMO Maize Shortages Threaten SA Industry

13. (U) The World Food Program (WFP), one of the biggest buyers of South Africa's non-GMO maize, has raised concerns about projected insufficient supplies of South African organic maize, and is considering buying organic maize elsewhere. WFP spokesman Richard

Lee said the price for South African maize is good and it can easily be transported to final destinations by either land or sea. Lee added that it is possible WFP will stop buying South African maize due to inadequate control measures. Lee noted that many African maize-recipient countries do not want GMO maize, and the demand for non-GMO maize has escalated. Farmers complain that it is difficult to separate GMO from non-GMO maize because of cross pollination; some milling companies argue that grain storage facilities are contaminated with GMO maize. Both factors make it difficult to export GMO-free maize. Lee said WFP bought 400,000 tons of maize from South Africa and wants to increase its purchases because of crop surpluses and good market prices. Lee said the demand for maize has resulted in record purchases in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. Maize exporters want the government to ensure a reliable local supply of non-GMO maize for the export market.

Wildfires Kill Fourteen People, Injure
Sixty and Destroy 635 Houses

14. (U) Wildfires roared through vast areas across the Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) province, killing fourteen people, injuring sixty others, and Q(KZN) province, killing fourteen people, injuring sixty others, and destroying property and animals. Provincial Minister of Local Government, Housing and Traditional Affairs Michael Mabuyakhulu said that casualties included the six-year-old daughter of the ANC President Jacob Zuma's nephew who died from injuries caused by a piece of corrugated steel sheet that flew off the roof of her family homestead. Mabuyakhulu confirmed that a fire-fighter pilot lost his life when his light aircraft was brought down by strong winds. The Minister noted that 635 houses were destroyed. KZN remains on high fire alert. Mabuyakhulu said he did not believe the fires were started naturally, and added that provincial officials were working with the police to investigate. Areas affected included Nkandla, Richards Bay and Umlazi in the northern region.

PRETORIA 00002274 002.2 OF 003

SA Moving Towards Knowledge-Based Economy

15. (U) The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) recently released results of a national research and development (R&D) survey indicating that South Africa spent R16.5 billion (\$2.06 billion) on R&D during the 2006/7 fiscal year. This is an increase from the 2005/06 R&D expenditure of R14.1 billion (\$1.76 billion). Department of Science and Technology (DST) Director-General Dr. Phil Mjwara noted that South Africa would likely meet its goal of spending one percent of GDP on R&D by 2008/09. Mjwara said the increased R&D expenditure showed South Africa's growing participation in and progress towards a knowledge-based economy. The HSRC survey indicated that most R&D was in the engineering sciences research (20.9 percent), natural sciences (20.3 percent), higher education (20 percent), and medical and health sciences (15.1 percent). Mjwara said the survey revealed that local business was the major funder for R&D, financing 51.3 percent of total R&D. Only 10.6 percent of South Africa's R&D is financed from abroad. The survey was commissioned by the DST and involved comprehensive surveys of business, government (including the nine science councils), higher education and non-profit sectors.

Global Scientists Encouraged to Assist South
African Scientists

16. (U) Former South African Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated at the September 14, 2008, International Association of Science Parks (IASP) conference that, "One of South Africa's biggest challenges is human resource development." Mlambo-Ngcuka urged scientists from around the world to assist South Africa in increasing the number of skilled scientists through human resource development programs. She noted that science parks provide an opportunity to share knowledge and information and thus act to

accelerate the knowledge economy. Speaking at the same event, Minister of Science and Technology (DST) Mosibudi Mangena said science parks fostered entrepreneurship and economic competitiveness, thus creating environments that enhance knowledge sharing and commercialization of technology.

17. (U) Minister Mangena also announced that the DST would establish a Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) in the near future. This agency would stimulate and intensify technological innovation, support local inventions, and create a platform for commercialization. IAST ran concurrently with the International Science, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (INSITE) and the Bio2Biz 2008 conference at the Sandton Convention Centre. INSITE provides a platform for showcasing international innovative solutions to social and economic challenges, while Bio2Biz 2008 highlights international biotechnology trends and developments. This is the first IAST conference held in South Africa; until recently the Innovative Hub in Pretoria was Africa's only internationally accredited Science Park. Morocco and Tunisia have also established science parks.

Dow Jones Sustainability Index Lists Sasol

18. (U) Sasol Chief Executive Pat Davies announced that the petrochemicals company has become the first South African industrial Qpetrochemicals company has become the first South African industrial company to be listed on the Dow Jones sustainability world index. Davies said: "This is a great achievement for Sasol because our previous best was to get to the top 15% in the oil and gas sector last year." Sasol, one of South Africa's largest polluters, has an abatement project at Sasol Nitro that converts greenhouse gas nitrous oxide into nitrogen and oxygen as a clean development mechanism (CDM). Davies said that Sasol, unlike other participants in CDM, does not sell its carbon credits. The Dow Jones sustainability world index, established in 1999, consists of the top 10% of the largest stocks in the Dow Jones global indexes in terms of sustainability and environmental practices. The corporate sustainability of the companies is assessed using a weighting system that considers various economic, environmental and social metrics. Dow Jones indexes editor and Executive Director John Prestbo stated that several institutional investors were factoring in sustainability "and a growing number of market participants are integrating long-term economic, environmental and social factors into their analysis".

PRETORIA 00002274 003.2 OF 003

Cabinet Leads the Way in South Africa
Tree-Planting Campaign

19. (U) Cabinet Leads the Way in South African Tree Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Lindiwe Hendricks distributed trees to all cabinet members during the first week in September to mark the start of Arbor Week. The Cabinet endorsed Hendricks campaign encouraging South Africans to plant trees. Former President Thabo Mbeki and Minister Hendricks launched the campaign entitled "Plant a Million Trees" in 2007, when the two planted trees in GaRankuwa, Pretoria. The various South African provinces have collectively planted 681,749 trees since the start of the campaign. Mpumalanga province leads all the other provinces, with 129,314 trees planted.

DME Delays Issuance of Seashore Mining License

110. (U) Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) spokesman Bheki Khumalo announced that there would a delay in issuing titanium mining licenses to Australian Minerals Resources Commodities (MRC) and local subsidiary Transworld Energy and Minerals (TEM). MRC and TEM sought to extract titanium from sand dunes located along the common border of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal provinces.

Legal Resources Center (LRC) had appealed the previous granting of the license, claiming that the local communities' input and consent had not been sought. The mineral advisory board will now hear arguments by the opposing parties. Local communities oppose the titanium mining because they fear losing their access to grazing lands and to lands where their ancestors are buried. LRC attorney Sarah Sephton hoped the minister would put a permanent stop to the proposed mining project. DME argues that mining will bring infrastructure development and job opportunities for the local communities.

South African 2008 Tree of the Year:
Harpephyllum Caffrum Bernh

¶11. (U) -- Family: Anacardiaceae (mango family)
-- Common names: wild plum (English); wildepruim (Afrikaans); umGwenya (Zulu, Xhosa); Mothekele (Northern Sotho)
-- Description: The South African wild plum is a large, evergreen tree that grows up to fifty feet, and is usually found in riverine forests. The bark is smooth when young, becoming rough, and dark grey-brown. Branches are curved upwards, with leaves crowded towards the ends, forming a thick crown at the top of the tree. Shiny dark-green, glossy leaves are interspersed with the red leaves. The tree produces whitish green flowers throughout summer (November to February). Green plum-like fruits turn red when they ripen in autumn. They contain a single seed.
-- Distribution: The Harpephyllum caffrum grows from the Eastern Cape northwards through KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland, southern Mozambique, Limpopo and into Zimbabwe.
-- Derivation of name: The generic name Harpephyllum comes from the Greek, meaning sickle-like leaves. The specific name caffrum is derived from its place of origin, Kaffraria, now part of Eastern Cape. H. caffrum belongs to the Anacardiaceae (mango family), which is the fourth largest tree family in southern Africa, with approximately 80 tree species.
-- Uses and cultural aspects: H. caffrum fruit is widely utilized by birds, animals, insects and humans. The fruits are used in jams, Qby birds, animals, insects and humans. The fruits are used in jams, jellies and ros wine. The bark is a popular traditional medicine used to treat acne and eczema. Powdered burnt bark is used to treat sprains and bone fractures. The bark is also used for dyeing, producing a mauve color. In some parts of Eastern Cape, the root is used in traditional medicine for paralysis thought to have been contracted from walking over an area that has been poisoned. Larvae of the common hair tail butterfly (Anthene definite) and the Eggar moth (Lasiocampa kollikerii) feed on the leaves; bush babies, monkeys, baboons and bushbuck love the ripe plums. Birds including the Cape parrot, mousebird, barbet, bulbul, and African green pigeon feed on the fruit.

Monthly Factoid

¶12. (U) There are 18,000 indigenous vascular plant species in South Africa, 80% of which are uniquely South African.

BALL